



**Homeland
Security**

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News Release

29 SMUGGLED CHINESE ARRESTED AT THE PORT OF LOS ANGELES *7 hospitalized for minor injuries suffered after they attempted to leave the port*

LOS ANGELES — Officers with the Department of Homeland Security are continuing to piece together the details this afternoon of a human smuggling scheme that resulted in the arrest of 29 Chinese nationals at the Port of Los Angeles overnight.

The Chinese nationals, all men, were initially spotted by private port security personnel wandering in a cargo area near berth 214 at around 11:00 p.m. Sunday. The port police contacted the Department of Homeland Security and representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) responded.

When federal officers arrived at the scene, they discovered several of the men had sustained minor injuries when they attempted to scale fencing surrounding the cargo area. Four of the migrants were treated at local hospitals and returned to federal custody. Three remain hospitalized today, including one man who suffered a broken ankle.

This morning, CBP officers are processing and interviewing the aliens. So far, investigators have determined the migrants were smuggled into the United States inside two 40-foot long shipping containers on board the NYK Artemis, a Panamanian-registered vessel that arrived here April 2. Authorities say the ship, whose last port of call was Hong Kong, embarked for Los Angeles March 22. Prior to that, the ship also took on cargo in the Chinese cities of Xiamen and Shekou.

The circumstances of this latest incident are similar to those of past human smuggling scenarios. Officers at the scene say the stench coming from the containers was overwhelming. Inside, agents found piles of discarded food packages, blankets, and containers overflowing with human waste. In addition to food and water, the containers were outfitted with car batteries to power small portable fans.

Once CBP completes its initial interviews with the smuggled migrants, they will be turned over to ICE, which is handling the actual smuggling investigation. ICE agents say smuggling fees for migrants from China typically range from \$30,000 to \$60,000 a person.

Later today, the Chinese nationals are expected to be transported to ICE detention facilities in the Los Angeles area, where they will be held pending the outcome of their immigration proceedings.

Last night's discovery marks the second human smuggling incident uncovered at the Port of Los Angeles since January, when 32 smuggled Chinese migrants were found inside a container on board a Panamanian-flagged vessel, the NYK Athena.

The number of Chinese nationals being smuggled in through Los Angeles area ports has dropped off significantly in the last several years. ICE officials attribute the decrease to expanded international cooperation and law enforcement efforts.

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